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A SERMON,

PREACHED AT KINGSTON, UPPER CANADA,

ON SUNDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1827,

ON OCCASION OF

DIVINE SERVICE

AT THE OPENING OF

St. George's Church.

BY THE VENERABLE GEORGE OKILL STUART, AM. LLD.

*Archdeacon of Kingston, and Missionary for the Society for
Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts.*

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1827.

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A SERMON.

1ST SAMUEL, 12TH CHAPTER, 24TH VERSE.

"Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart ; for consider how great things he hath done for you."

The doctrines of Religion are adapted to direct the understanding of Man to the most elevated and ennobling objects of contemplation, and to bring into exercise the best affections of the human heart, in the performance of our religious, social, and personal duties. They are also applicable to the instruction, comfort, and happiness of the human race under all the varying circumstances, individuals may be placed, distinguished as Gentile, Jew, and Christian. Upon these different people the light of the Gospel shines : for the Sun of Righteousness has visited them, dispelled the shades of ignorance and error and blessed them with the meridian brightness of Evangelical truth. "Whereby the day spring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of Death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The doctrine of the existence of God, of his natural attributes and moral perfections is necessary to the improvement of human nature, and produces firm faith, confident hope and sincere obedience. With the knowledge of the divine existence is associated the idea of infinite power. In the exercise of power, we behold proofs of wisdom and goodness in the works of Creation. Hence arise the duties of piety and devotion, and of public worship.—

From this source emanates the desire of conciliating the favour of the Almighty and of enjoying true felicity.

The argument that establishes in our minds the belief of the existence of God is obvious and plain. From a survey of creation, we have an intuitive conviction that there exists a first cause our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Conscious of our existence and endued with a Soul, we infer that we have derived all from a supreme and omnipotent cause, the Creator of us, and all things by which we are surrounded. This conviction being confirmed by a survey of the objects, directs the understanding, and excites the heart to invoke the wisdom, adore the power and celebrate the goodness of God. In the words of my Text we are exhorted "to fear the Lord and serve him in truth, with all our heart ; for consider how great things he hath done for us."

If irreligion and profaneness were unknown among us ; if a reverence for God were generally manifested ; if the solemn observance of the Sabbath were practised by all the members of society ; if attendance on public worship and the ordinances of religion were regularly and steadily maintained by the professors of christianity ; then might we congratulate ourselves upon a conscientious discharge of our duty ; then should we not be included among them, to whom the affectionate and severe reproof of the Prophet may be addressed "A Son says he, honoureth his Father and a servant his master. If I then be a Father, where is mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"

There are duties corresponding to the relation we sustain to the Almighty. It is our duty, publicly to pray to him, by whose power we were created. It is our duty

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unitedly to celebrate his wisdom, who has provided all things for our sustenance and happiness. It is our indispensable duty to be grateful for his goodness who protects and preserves us in this world and inspires our Souls with anticipations of future felicity in Heaven.

Whatever reasonable cause there may have hitherto existed for complaint or dissatisfaction ; whatever remarks may have been made on the declension of religion and piety ; what ever insinuations may have been propagated to the discouragement of public devotion ; these impediments do not obstruct and darken the prospect before us of Religion and virtue being ultimately predominant and universally extended. Under the influence of this impression, it becomes our duty to maintain a zeal for the honour of God, the interests of our Redeemer's Kingdom and the dissemination of vital and practical piety.

With becoming decency and pious demeanor we should assemble in this sacred edifice and present our prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, supplicating pardon for our sins, and pleading the intercession of our Redeemer, through whom we address the Almighty. We shall come to this sacred place, and shall receive instruction and consolation. In the season of prosperity we shall pour forth the effusions of a thankful heart to the Father of mercies. In the time of adversity, we shall be comforted with the salutary counsels of patience and resignation.

Sincerely performing our religious duties, piety towards God will be accompanied by charity towards Man. For may we not reasonably hope and confidently trust that the performance of our duty in religious worship will make us more attentive to our relative and social obligations. The reverence and humility with which we

bow and kneel before the Almighty ; the faith we profess in our adorable Redeemer will be manifested in acts of respect and good will to our superiors, in a deportment kind and civil to our equals, condescending and mild to our inferiors. Mutual attachment and affection will be expressive of contentment and happiness in the conjugal union. Children will be instructed in the christian faith, and will grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and servants will obey for conscience sake, in honesty and well-doing.

These graces and virtues of a christian life will necessarily follow from a conscientious and regular attendance on divine worship. May you who are assembled on the present occasion, and who resolve more faithiully to do your duty in living answerably to your christian vocation and profession, be strengthened with the divine support of your Redeemer and the assisting grace of the Holy Spirit, and be finally blessed with eternal felicity in Heaven, "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth, with all your heart ; for consider how great things he hath done for you."

The will of God was announced to Man in the Mosaic and christian Revelations, and in them were declared the divine and moral perfections of holiness, justice, and mercy, and these were illustrated by signal or extraordinary events of Providence. The divine communications by Revelation from the time of Adam to the age in which Noah lived (however clear and explicit they may have originally been in the early ages of the world) are recorded in the Bible in brief and obscure language.—Even the Mosaic is of that character when compared with the christian Revelation. It was the plan adopted

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by infinite wisdom, adapted to the nature and character of Man, and suited to the varying circumstances of the world. All these, (distinct as many conceive them to be) are connected, and dependent one on the other. In them temporal rewards and future and eternal blessings were promised ; in them temporal evils and judgements with future and everlasting punishment were denounced. In them atonement for guilt and transgression were taught through propitiatory sacrifices, and faith producing holiness. In the time predicted by the Prophets and conformably to the counsels of infinite wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah appeared in the world, as Mediator of the old and new covenant, and the Redeemer of mankind. "The law was given to Moses : but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

In the summary exhortation contained in my Text "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth, with all your heart : for consider how great things he hath done for you," the Prophet Samuel alludes to the events narrated in the sacred volume. The divine perfections of holiness, justice, and mercy were displayed towards a Nation selected to serve God, and to become an example of the rewards and blessings enjoyed by obedience, and of the evils and judgements inflicted for disobedience and ingratitude. What do we learn from the condescension of the Almighty invisible manifestations of his presence, delivering the Israelites from the bondage of oppression in Egypt, and in conducting them to the possession of freedom and abundance in the land of Canaan ? What do we learn from the intimations (though obscure) that were given to them of a higher state of future felicity in Heaven, and of our Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah, who

should come to confirm all the predictions of the Prophets? And lastly, what do we learn from the holy and solemn transaction at mount Sinai when the law was delivered to the Israelites amidst fire, and earth-quakes, thunder, and lightning, the most sublime and majestic indications of God's presence?

These acts of the Almighty, and events in divine Providence teach us the salutary lessons of fear, love, and obedience. The Almighty governs the world, and under the divine administration, individuals equally with nations are rewarded or punished. In the wonders of creation, the Gentile beholds the evidence of the natural attributes of the Deity, and to him, these are a law for his faith and conduct. This source of knowledge and duty the Israelite or Jew possesses with the additional benefit of instruction derived from the history of God's transactions with his nation and favoured individuals.— They were signally rewarded, when they believed in God, trusted in him and obeyed his commands. On the contrary they were remarkably punished, when they disregarded the authority of God, embraced idolatry and disobeyed the Almighty. To these two sources of knowledge there is superadded to the christian a promise of the blessings of redemption, and above all the “unspeakable gift of our Saviour Jesus Christ,” by whom “through the Gospel, life and immortality has been brought to light.”

The motives that have influenced this pious and religiously disposed congregation of St. George's Church to unite in contributing a portion of their wealth for the erection and completion of this durable, neat, and costly edifice, are of the most pure, disinterested, and laudable

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nature. Originating from the desire to promote the glory of God, the happiness, peace and good order of society, and more especially to contribute to the salvation of Men from misery and ruin in a future state, the motives partake not of selfishness, of temporal interest nor of vain ostentation. *The Donations presented and expended are an offering and acknowledgement to God for all our temporal mercies, to our Redeemer for all spiritual blessings and to the Holy Ghost for the illuminating operations of grace in our repentance, conversion and sanctification. In this sacred temple the doctrines of revealed religion and the evidences of christianity will be explained and preached to all people, recommended to their serious attention and inculcated on their memories. However men do and will differ from one another in the form and ceremony of addressing their prayers to the Almighty; however in our public worship, we do differ from the

* With a liberality honourable to the subscribers, the Donations amounted to the sum of £1400 Currency. The Lieutenant Governor of the Province granted the land for the site on which the edifice stands, and he also obtained a munificent Donation of £1500 Sterling from the government. The sum of £100 Cur'y. was obtained from the Bishop of Quebec, and to these sums has been added a loan to a considerable amount to be repaid with interest. To his Excellency's piety and example and to the counsel and management of a Committee are to be ascribed the furtherance and final success of the undertaking. The corner stone was laid amidst a public procession and with religious solemnity, on Monday the 20th day of June, 1825, by his Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland. K. C. B.

congregations, which have erected commodious edifices, and have set them apart for divine worship, we may reasonably presume and charitably hope that in all Churches, the doctrines of Revelation are taught and explained, and the christian graces and moral virtues are recommended and enforced. While then we enjoy the right and privilege of giving preference to the Church in which we have been instructed and educated, we leave to others the freedom of enquiry, and the right of judgement, and to enter the courts of the Lord's house upon the decision of serious enquiry and conviction, being careful however that our course of life is such as may be expected from our advantages and blessings. We give a preference to this Church, above others, because we believe that her doctrines are sound and scriptural, her faith pure, and her discipline and government consonant to the usages and practice of christianity in the Apostolic age, and in the succeeding periods to the present time. Preserving the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace let us by our principles and conduct, make it evident to all around us that we are sincere and worthy members of the Church to which we belong, and in which we are instructed, comforted and edified. Endeavour to acquire the principles of true religion, and neglect not to cultivate the spirit of devotion : that there may be in you such an heart that you would fear God and keep his commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it ; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart ; for consider how great things he hath done for you."

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The disposition of heart towards God is justly and properly expressed by fear. It means not a servile but a filial fear. It is a reverential awe of God's natural attributes and an affectionate love of him for his moral perfections. Can we think of his infinite power and not pray to him for protection? Can we think of his wisdom in our preservation, and not praise him for our support? Can we think of his goodness and not thank him for all his gifts and mercies? Gratitude constrains us to assemble ourselves together and publicly to worship God in spirit and truth and to serve him with all our heart in faithful obedience to his commandments. Can we be insensible to his holiness, justice and mercy, when we reflect upon the intercession of our adorable Redeemer Jesus Christ, through whose sufferings and sacrifice, expiation has been made for our original depravity, and actual guilt; a restoration to the divine favour accomplished, and acceptance with God secured upon our repentance, faith and obedience? Can we, without emotions of the most fervent thankfulness, acknowledge the influences of the Holy Spirit, in converting us from sin to holiness and in keeping us in the way that leads to peace, rest and happiness? His influences are known to all sincere believers. His communications are imparted to all who seek them by prayer and yield to his constraining, assisting and comforting grace.

Here then, in this sacred edifice, we can serve God in truth, with all our heart. Here we shall be sensible of the divine presence, his name will be adored with reverence, and his praises will be celebrated with gratitude and joy. It may be asked, what will constitute the glory and excellence of this Church, and what will ren-

der it a place acceptable to the Lord ? It will become the habitation of the Almighty by the presence of Christ in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the due and faithful administration of the Sacraments. In prosecuting this arrangement, the speaker is aware that his thoughts may not be original, and from the nature of the occasion, he may participate in the words and sentiments of others.— Should, then, there be a coincidence in these respects, he trusts that it will not lessen the importance of the subject, or make it less acceptable to the congregation, or less conducive to their benefit or improvement.

Let us, then in imagination, suppose that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is present in this sacred place. He would teach the most heavenly and interesting doctrines and he would administer the most soothing consolations. "I am the Resurrection and Life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Here he would declare in accents of mercy and love " come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will refresh you with pardon, peace and rest." Here he would declare in affectionate language " Whosoever doth the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and mother."

Behold him here present in the character given by the Prophet Isaiah, " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

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edifice prove to be, if with these becoming ornaments were not associated the presence of our Redeemer. With how much unconcern would all these things be viewed, if we were not thereby reminded of him, who in a spiritual sense may be said to be present in the ministry of the word, the faithful preaching of the Gospel.

It will become the Ministers of Christ and it will be their bounden duty in obedience to their professional vows to preach the word truly and faithfully. It will be required that in this sacred place they preach the true and pure doctrines of our Redeemer; that they will lay no other foundation for their discourses and exhortations than Jesus Christ and him crucified, and consequently justification by faith, and acceptance of a sinner through the atoning blood of Christ and the mediation of the Son of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ will be spiritually present in the due and faithful administration of the Holy Sacraments.—In this sacred place will be presented the infant for admission into the Church of Christ, in order that he may be regenerated by the Holy Ghost and received into Christ's holy Church and be made a lively member of the same. Here will be impressed upon the infant the sign of the Cross, in token hereof that he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the Devil and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. In this sacred edifice will be received the solemn pledge from the sponsors in Baptism that the infant will be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, the nature of the solemn vow, promise and confession made by them, and that the infant will be instruc-

ted in all things which a christian ought to know and to believe to his soul's health.

In this sacred edifice will be administered the solemn office of the Holy Eucharist, and before you on the christian altar will be exhibited the Bread and Wine, symbols of the sacrifice and sufferings of Christ, and of our redemption from sin and misery by his propitiatory atonement. And if all who shall by faith participate in the Sacrament, and who shall devote themselves to the service of God, become conspicuous for holiness and distinguished by charity and benevolence : then is our Saviour personally present here in the midst of the congregation of his faithful disciples. It may then be said that this edifice is holy, and that this distinction becomes of more consequence than all its vanity of embellishment.

This edifice is erected and opened for the worship of the Almighty. May all who assemble together here become a holy people and may the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon them and bless the congregation.—“Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you.”

Let us on this solemn and interesting occasion be thankful for the higher blessings, hopes and rewards of the christian dispensation, and also call to remembrance the signal advantages and benefits we enjoy and have experienced under the protection of Almighty God from the first settlement of this Province, (embracing a period nearly of half a century) to the present time. I cannot forbear, publicly to declare “that God hath done many great things for us.” Under divine providence we have a constitution and form of government continued to us,

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under which we live and are favoured with protection, enjoying liberty and freedom to the extent that is consistent with the general interests and welfare of society.

We live in undisturbed right and enjoy the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience, enlightened and informed by the word of God. In accordance with divine Revelation in the Mosaic dispensation, it was commanded that a maintenance should be set apart for those who served the Lord in holy offices and were the priest hood under that dispensation. A similar provision is enjoined in the precepts of our Saviour and recommended in the epistles of the Apostles. Hence it has been the wisdom of our King and nation to establish a constitution of government for our benefit and welfare in which a distinction has been given to the Church, of which we are members, and in which we have been instructed and educated. This pre-eminence is favourable and conducive to the general extension of christianity, and to the enjoyment of natural, social and domestic happiness. No oppression or injustice is exercised towards the Churches and congregations who differ from us in their mode of worship and the spiritual disciplines under which they are established and increase. The donation is liberal, and yet not greater than is competent to the sacred objects to which the same has been consecrated.—No exactions are imposed on others, and wealth is not usurped from them for her aggrandizement and splendour. We all equally participate in the blessings and advantages of christianity and are happy under the protection of a mild, just and impartial government.

Let us then conscientiously discharge our christian obligations and perform our moral duties by devotedness to

the service of God, by constitutional loyalty to our King and to all in authority under him ; and let us continue in brotherly love and kindness one towards another, rendering unto God the things that are God's, and to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart : for consider how great things he hath done for you."

May Almighty God grant a blessing upon this and all our undertakings for his glory, and assist us with his grace, that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in him, we may glorify his holy name, and finally obtain everlasting life.

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

AMEN.

ERRATA

In the title page, instead of "for the Society for propagating the Gospel," read *from* the Society for the propagation of the Gospel, &c.

Page 5, line 3, for "greateful," read *grateful*.

Page 7, seventh line from bottom, for "invisible" read *in visible*.

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